

The Land Matrix – Measuring Large-Scale Land Acquisitions

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Abstract

Since 2009 a partnership between CDE at the University of Bern, CIRAD, GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, GIZ and ILC, has been systematically collating and verifying information on large-scale land acquisitions. This Land Matrix records transactions that entail a transfer of rights to use, control or own land through sale, lease or concession that are 200 ha or larger; and that have been concluded since the year 2000. The database is now the largest of its kind, and in 2012 will become publicly accessible.

The data comes from a variety of sources that include media reports, reports by international organizations and NGOs as well as academic research including field-based research projects. These different reports are being sourced through the two most active Internet portals that deal with land transactions, www.commercialpressuresonland.org of the Land Portal operated by the International Land Coalition (ILC) and www.farmlandgrab.org operated by the NGO GRAIN.

The database distinguishes four levels of data reliability. More specifically, a reliability ranking between 0 and 3 was introduced.

- Reliability rank 0: Land transactions only reported by the press or other sources (typically from the internet) that have not undergone any process of verification. These transactions will be referred to as “only reported”.
- Reliability rank 1: Transactions reported by sources that are judged reliable, in particular transactions reported in research papers based on empirical evidence through field research, information on company websites (information on the main columns, such as: size, produce, year), as well as government records.
- Reliability rank 2: Land transactions that have been checked by the Land Matrix Partnership through questionnaires submitted to organizations working in the host country
- Reliability Rank 3: Deals where contractual agreements have been made publicly available.

As the database matures, cases will be upgraded in terms of their reliability. To ease the presentation of the results, all cases with reliability ranking 1, 2 or 3, have been classified as ‘reliable’ (in opposition to ‘only reported’).